

History in Hampton Roads

The exhibition will juxtapose the museum's extensive collection of 19th century maritime paintings with conceptual pieces by contemporary artists.

Norfolk, Va.— A new exhibition at the Barry Art Museum at Old Dominion University will consider the rich maritime history in Hampton Roads through a call and response between past and present artworks.

“Message in a Bottle: Picturing Maritime Culture in Hampton Roads,” opening April 13, 2024, and on display through Jan. 5, 2025, will juxtapose the museum’s extensive collection of 19th century maritime paintings with conceptual pieces by contemporary artists, including ODU faculty. The exhibition will also feature works from local museums such as the Mariner’s Museum and the Chrysler Museum of Art.

In the exhibition, traditional oil paintings – carefully collected by museum co-founder Richard Barry – tell a story of life on the sea and show the hard work and play of sailors and soldiers. Contemporary works created by ODU faculty and other artists, in turn, reflect on the indelible impact of maritime culture on modern life, from the shipping routes underpinning globalization to the layout of cities.

"The catalyst for this exhibition was to reinterpret the museum's collection of historical maritime paintings alongside more contemporary considerations of maritime culture," said Sara Woodbury, curator of art for the Barry Art Museum. "We wanted to highlight how maritime culture has shaped this region and its global impact across time, whether that encompasses international shipping, military activities or recreation."

The exhibition also ties into ODU’s annual campus theme, “Blue Connections,” a university-wide effort to explore the crucial role oceans and waterways play in society and the global economy through coursework, research projects, art and other events.

ABOUT THE BARRY ART MUSEUM

The Barry Art Museum is positioned at the gateway to Old Dominion University, at 1075 W. 43rd Street in Norfolk, Virginia. Opened in 2018, the museum features a glass sculpture collection from internationally recognized artists, which contributes substantially to the region’s growing reputation as a glass art center. The museum’s collection also includes American modernist paintings, historic and antique dolls, and automata. The museum is committed to expanding its collection to support a diverse body of work from contemporary and living artists. The Barry Art Museum is open Tuesday through Friday 11 a.m.– 5 p.m., Saturday and Sunday 12–5 p.m. Admission is free, along with a full programming calendar, and multiple rotating exhibitions annually.

ABOUT OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

Old Dominion University, located in Norfolk, is Virginia’s forward-focused public doctoral research university with approximately 23,500 students, rigorous academics, an energetic residential community and initiatives that contribute \$2.6 billion annually to Virginia’s economy. Learn more at odu.edu.